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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 005005

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IECI RECOVERS FROM ERRORS THAT OMITTED OVER 600,000 NAMES FROM IRAQ VOTER LISTS

Classified By: Robert Political Counselor S. Ford
for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) Summary. When comparing the list of registered voters used for the October referendum with the list prepared for the December 15 election, the Kirkuk office of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) found a discrepancy in the number of voters. Alerted to this issue by the Kurdish community, the IECI headquarters in Baghdad then conducted a preliminary review of all of the voter registration lists prepared for the upcoming election. This review led to the discovery of a computer error that had inadvertently resulted in the omission of over 600,000 names nationwide from the voter rolls. The IECI corrected this error by issuing supplemental lists to the affected polls.

2. (C) Summary cont'd: This discovery and follow-on corrective response by the IECI averted a potential election-day crisis that could have called into question the validity of the election process. The IECI Board of Directors expressed deep disappointment that this error occurred, and the UN-lead International Election Assistance Team (IEAT) accepted full responsibility for what they judged to be inadequate quality control on the part of the IEAT staff. The IECI has also developed a stop-gap solution to a separate problem of suspicious registration of 81,297 names in the sensitive province of Kirkuk. Unfortunately, in Kirkuk the two problems are being conflated and fueling fears of fraud. Reports of missing and deleted voter names and multiple voter registration lists, aggravated by the IECI's sluggish and opaque manner in responding to public concern, have tarnished confidence in the IECI. End Summary.

COMPUTER ERROR OMITTS OVER 600,000 NAMES FROM VOTER LIST

3. (C) A comparison conducted by the IECI Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) in Kirkuk between the voter registration list used in Kirkuk during the October referendum and the list prepared for the December 15 election uncovered a significant numerical discrepancy. UN/IECI Commissioner Craig Jenness told PolOffs on December 11 that the IECI Commissioners received December 10 a Kurdish delegation which filed a complaint with the IECI regarding more than 200,000 names missing from the Kirkuk voter lists. A follow-up investigation conducted by IECI headquarters on the night of December 10 revealed that in addition to the reported 200,000 names, approximately 400,000 more names were discovered missing nationwide from the voter lists. The impacted lists affected polling centers throughout all parts of Iraq ? unfortunately, by far the largest number was in Kirkuk, the most sensitive province.

4. (C) The IECI attributed the omissions to human error which had occurred when the individual polling center lists were generated from the master database. Jenness explained that the IECI personnel responsible for creating the list most likely failed to include all the appropriate data fields (or, database attributes) when they downloaded the individual reports. He added that poor quality control along the production line was a contributing factor to this error remaining undetected.

5. (C) Jenness indicated that the IECI found a technical remedy to this problem by providing each impacted polling center with a supplemental voter list that contained the missing names. The IECI polling station staff has been instructed that they must check both the master voter list and the supplemental voter list to locate the name of each voter who shows up to vote on December 15. If these checks fail to locate the voter's name, Jenness explained that the voter will still be allowed to vote if he produces his voter registration document (Form 91) plus a photo identification.

16. (C) The situation in Kirkuk is further complicated by the fact that in a separate action the IECI headquarters had purposely dropped 81,297 names from the Kirkuk registration list. These names, which had been added to the rolls at the end of the voter registration period in August, were found to be suspicious and rejected in November following a review by IECI headquarters that indicated slightly more than half of the registrations were fraudulent (e.g., duplicate name or ID number or signature). In the event a legitimate voter has been caught up in this excision of 81,297 names, he too can vote if he produces his voter registration document (Form 91) plus a photo ID. The IECI has engaged in a tardy public outreach campaign to make this clear to voters in Kirkuk. While not all of the 81,297 suspicious registrations can be attributed to Kurds, it appears that most can. Non-Kurds (Turcomans and Assyrian Christians) object strenuously to the IECI's solution, saying it opens the door to massive fraud by Kurds from outside Kirkuk who never registered at all.

COMMENT

17. (C) Reports of missing and deleted names and multiple voter registration lists, aggravated by the IECI's sluggish and opaque manner in responding to public concern, have undermined confidence in the IECI. Notwithstanding the expeditious resolution of the computer error that led to the inadvertent omission of over 600,000 names, the controversy created by the IECI's deletion of some 81,000 names from the Kirkuk voter update has increased uneasiness about electoral fraud and raised fresh questions about the IECI's competence and independence. Of all places in Iraq, Kirkuk may be the most at risk for voter fraud given the intense ethnic competition for predominance in the city. The IECI is demonstrating an appropriate commitment to full voter participation -- balanced by a responsibility to deter fraud -- by allowing those whose names are not on the registration lists to vote if they produce a copy of their voter registration document. The IECI in Baghdad took this step despite their conviction that at least half of the registered names on the Kirkuk excised list of some 81,000 are fraudulent. In response to this decision, communities such as the Turcomans and Assyrian Christians have assailed the IECI action, viewing it as yet another example of the IECI kowtowing to Kurd pressure in what they consider a clear-cut case of fraud. Given the circumstances, the IECI has probably chosen the best option available to them, but no side is fully satisfied with the results.
KHALILZAD